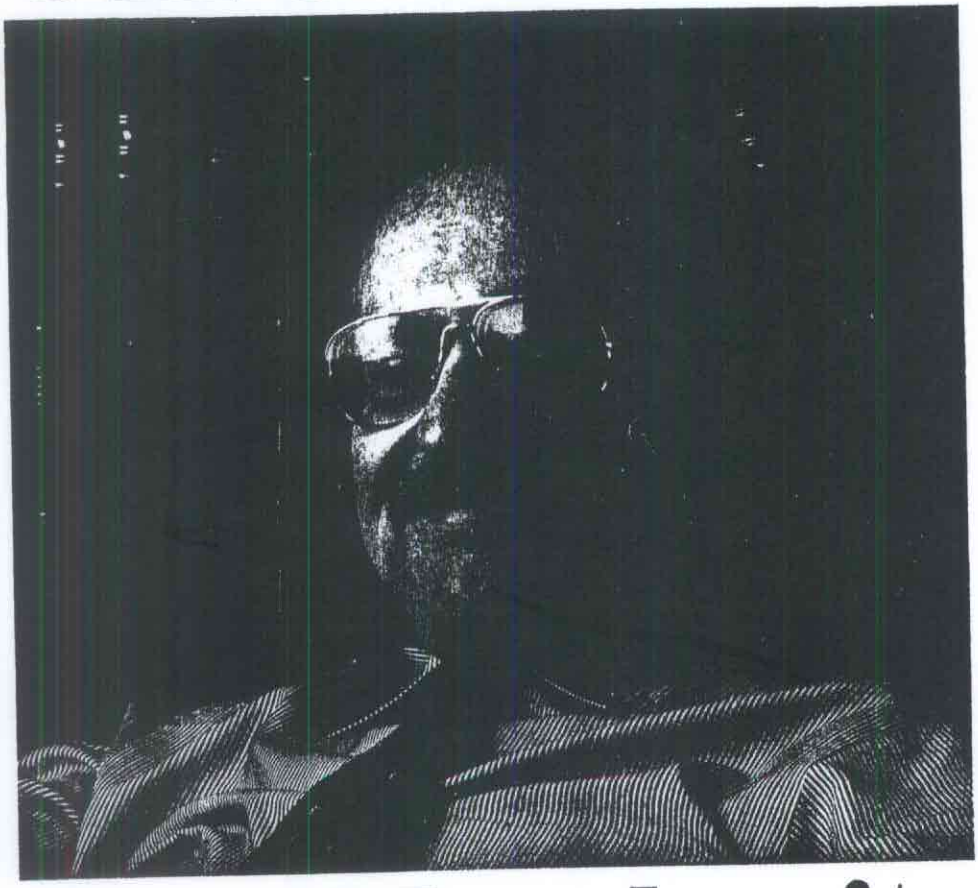
CHUTZPAH



Alan M. Dershowitz

Author of Reversal of Fortune

: that Jews are condemned from the right and the left is
:w. Over the years, we have grown accustomed to anti-
paganda from the extreme right and, more recently, from
e left. What is relatively new is the growing acceptability
'ish bigotry among some intellectuals, university students,
ate black and third world leaders.

ɔw in realizing how quickly the world was changing. Dur-
ɜt decade of my professional life, I worked on the causes of
:odden, the underdog, the unrepresented. But it was always
le's causes: the civil rights struggle, the antiwar movement,
ign against capital punishment, the litigation for freedom of
, and the fight for gender equality. My clients and causes
ewish. (Indeed, the only client whom I remember as being
s porn star Harry Reems, and he certainly wasn't being
l for doing anything particularly Jewish.) Being a Jewish
t in other people's causes was the most natural feeling in the
was expected of us, and we were appreciated for it.

n the 1970s, things began to change, at first imperceptibly
quite palpably. University campuses are often the bellwether
, and yet I did not believe that what I was experiencing at
ecessarily reflected trends in the outside world. I soon learned
riends and others that it did, at least to some degree. It was
"in" to be Jewish, either at Harvard or outside. Third world
re meeting with greater receptivity. While antiapartheid
:e being attended by thousands (including large numbers of
riet Jewry rallies attracted only a handful of students, nearly
n Jewish. Pro-PLO speakers were more popular by far than
speakers. Although the lie of Holocaust denial was receiving
iacy among established scholars, some schools were welcom-
ionist" speakers.

beginning of the 1980s, my old friends from Brooklyn were
their children — as I was mine — in colleges around the
I was receiving reports of how difficult it was to be a com-
w on college campuses from Berkeley to New York City
Jewish students no longer experienced social exclusion on
f their heritage, but politically involved Jews — those active
or Soviet Jewry causes — were made to feel as if they were
y defenders of colonialism. Jewishness on college campuses
ly on the defensive.

:hat the time had come for Harvard to put its considerable

prestige behind Jewish values and aspirations, the way it had done, for example, in regard to black and third world concerns. In recent years, Harvard had bestowed honorary degrees on important symbols of other people's aspirations: Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, humanitarian Mother Teresa, civil rights figure Bayard Rustin, jurist Barbara Jordan, and others. I began to urge the powers that be to do the same for Jews. Over a several-year period, I suggested Elie Wiesel, Anatoly Shcharansky, Ida Nudel, Simon Wiesenthal, and others who represented Jewish values, aspirations, and suffering.

The decision to grant this high honor is shrouded in mystery. Discreet campaigns are conducted on behalf of potential honorees, and the decision is ultimately made by a group of about twelve alumni, professors, and members of the governing boards who are handpicked by the seven-man governing corporation. Jewish students and faculty had recommended Jewish heroes, but to no avail. It has been particularly galling that no recent honorees have been singled out in remembrance of the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Yet during the same period of time, several German officials — including some who fought for the Nazis — have been honored in various ways.*

To further exacerbate matters, in 1983 Harvard University named a major scholarship program after John J. McCloy, the American high commissioner to Germany after the war, who had pardoned Nazi war criminals and returned confiscated Nazi property to these criminals. McCloy had also played a leading role in the relocation and confinement of 110,000 innocent Japanese Americans during World War II. Moreover, he advised President Franklin Roosevelt to deny refuge to European Jews seeking to escape the Holocaust, and near the end of the war he advised against accepting the pleas of American Jewish leaders to bomb the rail lines leading to the death camps. He played an important role in rescuing Klaus Barbie, the Butcher of Lyon, from French justice. And finally, he presided over one of the most discriminatory law firms in the country.

In light of this history, it is not surprising that many Americans of Jewish and Japanese heritage did not regard John J. McCloy as a man deserving to be honored for his deeds. It is also not surprising that many German industrialists, especially those who did business as usual during the Hitler barbarities, regarded McCloy as some kind of hero.

* When Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem, was honored in 1984, the university went out of its way not to mention Israel, but rather to focus on the city of Jerusalem as a kind of ecumenical capital whose "precious heritage" Kollek had "preserved."

Accordingly, the Volkswagen Foundation funded the new Harvard program honoring him.

When a number of students complained to me about the McCloy honor, I recommended that they speak to the dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Graham Allison, who had recently acceded to the demands of black and other students to change the name of the library, which had been named after a family who had business interests in South Africa.

When a group of students went to see Allison about the McCloy scholarship, he made them feel — as the students, who left the meeting in tears, told me — "like moral lepers," who "did not understand anything about how the world or Harvard operates."[27]

He told the Jewish students that if they wanted to learn, they should speak to Professor Guido Goldmann — the son of Nahum Goldmann, late president of the World Jewish Congress — who had recommended to the Volkswagen Foundation that the scholarship be named after McCloy, a family friend.

Harvard had covered its Jewish rear by having one of its "house Jews" behind the proposal. During the postwar period, Goldmann's family had close personal, political, and business ties to McCloy. I had experienced this "house Jew" technique early in my years at Harvard. Whenever the university did anything that had the potential for creating tensions with Jewish students or faculty, the administration made sure that it had at least one house Jew on its side. It would then argue that the Jews were divided over the issue.

The house Jew phenomenon transcends Harvard. It is used widely by other institutions — corporate, governmental, social. I saw it firsthand while I worked in the nation's capital. In fact, Arthur Goldberg first alerted me to it. The role was one he adamantly refused to play. He was always an inside advocate for Jewish causes within the administrations he served; but he was never a house Jew who allowed his Jewish identity to be used to justify actions against what he perceived to be the Jewish interest. Goldberg always encouraged me to stand up against Harvard's house Jews.

It is not clear to me whether those who employ this technique realize how offensive it is. I recall receiving a letter once from President Derek Bok, who has generally been very sensitive to Jewish concerns, in which he responded to certain criticisms I had made of Harvard's admissions policies. He ended his letter with the following handwritten postscript: "I do not feel that anti-Semitic policies under

President Lowell provide much of a basis for attacking the current policies of our admissions committee. If you really feel that current policies may simply mask a deeper desire to exclude Jews, I suggest that you pursue this matter further with Al Sacks and Henry Rosovsky." Bok was thus inviting me to air my criticisms with two Jewish deans, who were more institutionally loyal than I was.

It was against this background that my phone began to ring off the hook on June 8, 1987. In that morning's *Boston Globe*, an article appeared under the heading "A Son Who Tries to Explain Away the Sins of His Nazi Father." The thrust of the article, by a Rice University history professor named Francis L. Lowenheim, was that Harvard was about to confer an honorary degree on a man who had actively and continuously attempted to cover up — and lie about — his father's role in Nazi crimes. The honoree was Richard von Weizsäcker, the president of the Federal Republic of Germany. His father, Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker, was convicted of war crimes at Nuremberg and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. John McCloy had commuted his sentence to one year. The baron had been Hitler's state secretary, a member of the Nazi party and the SS, and on the personal staff of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and Gestapo. He was the man who informed Adolf Eichmann, the official in charge of Jewish extermination, that there were no objections on the part of the German foreign ministry to the deportation of thousands of French and stateless Jews to Auschwitz. He was also the man who rejected Sweden's offer to accept Norwegian Jews about to be sent to Nazi death camps, and he refused to intervene on behalf of Catholic priests who were sent to the camps.

The Nazi war criminal's son, President Richard von Weizsäcker, was certainly no conscientious objector to Nazi aggression. He was a soldier who participated in the brutal invasion of Poland, which commenced Hitler's genocidal program. After the war, he helped his father construct a perjurious and unsuccessful defense before the Nuremberg Tribunal, which included the outrageous claim that even the Jews had no "misgivings against Auschwitz." As recently as 1985, Richard von Weizsäcker said, "I really believe that [my father] did not know about the existence of the gas chambers and the systematic mass killing."[28]

But the evidence was overwhelmingly to the contrary. The prosecutor who brought charges against the father has pointed to letters to Eichmann and other documents that prove that "he worked together

with the butchers." The prosecutor said that it must have been horrible for the son "discovering all these signatures and letters to Eichmann." But still the son persisted in trying — according to a *New York Times* reporter — to "rehabilitate his family name."[29]

Those who supported the Harvard honor pointed to a speech Weizsäcker gave in 1985 in which he appeared to acknowledge the guilt of his generation. "Who could remain unsuspecting after the burning of the synagogues . . . ? Whoever opened his eyes and ears and sought information could not fail to notice that Jews were being deported. . . . When the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust then became known at the end of the war all too many of us claimed that they had not known anything about it or even suspected anything."[30]

Yet while blaming others he persisted in claiming that his own father — who was no ordinary citizen or even mere Nazi party member — did not know. Perhaps a son should not be condemned for blinding himself to his father's guilt, but neither should he be honored for his mendacity and aided in his ignoble goal to "rehabilitate his family name."

Several of the calls I received that morning came from Holocaust survivors — Baron von Weizsäcker's victims. They did not want the Harvard honor to be understood as helping Richard von Weizsäcker to rehabilitate the deservedly disgraced name of his criminal father.

After reviewing Weizsäcker's record, I wrote him the following letter:

> In your speech to the Bundestag of May 8, 1985, you declared that "anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present."
>
> Many of us on the Harvard faculty, student body, and community believe that you have closed your eyes to your father's criminal past. We believe that you assisted your father in constructing a perjurious defense at the Nuremberg trials, and continue to deny that he knew of the Holocaust.
>
> A great university should be a place of discourse, not denial. I challenge you, therefore, to debate me about the role *you* have played — and continue to play — in covering up your father's ignoble past.

I received no reply from him, but I did get an immediate response from the Harvard police advising me that the "Secret Service had expressed concern about" any protests and warning me that "if something unexpected happens, they will act in the manner they deem fit." This seemed a bit disproportionate, since I had announced that all I

planned to do was hand out a leaflet at the entrance to Harvard Yard. The leaflet, entitled "The Other Side of Richard von Weizsäcker's Honor," described his role in denying his father's guilt and posed a series of questions such as "Do you believe a Harvard honor should be used to help 'rehabilitate' a family name which has been deservedly disgraced by a war criminal?"

At the ceremony itself, when the honor was conferred, Weizsäcker was described as having been born to a "distinguished family." He had succeeded in having Harvard rehabilitate his family name.

Within weeks of receiving the honor, Weizsäcker felt comfortable enough with his past to become the first European head of state to meet with Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, who had just been placed on our Justice Department watch list as a suspected Nazi war criminal. A few years later, Weizsäcker was instrumental in obtaining Dutch pardons for two major Nazi war criminals who had originally been sentenced to die for actively causing the murders of more than ten thousand Jews living in Holland, including Anne Frank. Their sentences were first commuted to life imprisonment, and then they were freed and given a hero's welcome by German compatriots. President Weizsäcker "praised" the Dutch decision, calling it a "humanitarian act."[31]

During the course of my protests, the Harvard administration again turned to its house Jews. They hastily convened a lunch in Weizsäcker's honor at which the Jewish dean of the faculty pointedly presided. Rabbi Ben Zion Gold — the head of Harvard Hillel — wrote a letter to the local Jewish newspaper which not only defended Harvard and Weizsäcker (many of the facts he pointed to had obviously been provided by the administration), but condemned those who were criticizing the honor. He characterized the newspaper articles that had opposed the honor as "gross mischief" and analogized their publication to "throwing a stink bomb into a giant party."[32] You can imagine how I felt reading this from the pen of my own rabbi, whom I admired — and continue to admire — so much. But I have long believed that even rabbis can be wrong. And Rabbi Gold was wrong in condemning critics of the Weizsäcker honor in such inappropriate terms.

Another recent event demonstrates how embarrassed some professors of Jewish background feel about their Jewishness. In the fall of 1989, an official delegation of Soviet prosecutors and judges — several of whom had personally participated in the persecutions of Jewish

well as individual. The Jewish nation could never again be restored, least not until its members accepted the true faith. The sons and ughters of the devil were destined to wander the earth, nationless, spised, destitute, and powerless.

When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Em- re in the fourth century, the church achieved the political power to sure that its prophecy of Jewish failure was fulfilled. Jews were cluded from positions of influence, and their rights — political, onomic, social, and religious — were taken away. It became a civic rtue, as well as a religious obligation, to contribute to the vilification the Jews. Thus, theological anti-Judaism devolved into more gen- alized economic, political, and social stigmatization and discrimi- ation against Jews. The Code of Justinian, enacted in 534 A.D., urtailed Jewish freedom of worship, banned Jews from holding public ffice, and divested them of most property rights.

These civic deprivations and discriminations spread throughout Eu- ope during the Middle Ages. Wherever Jews wandered throughout hristendom, they were burdened with theological and civil discrim- nation and vilification. They were segregated into ghettos, disquali- ied from engaging in "Christian" occupations, denied the right to vork the land, and forced into trades and professions that were per- eived as exploitative.

During the second millennium of Christianity, Jews were also mas- acred in large numbers by religious crusaders and inquisitors pur- orting to act in the name of their God. In 1096, French and German ews were subjected to mass murder by the first Crusaders, men who ave been glorified in literature, art, and history. It has always amazed ne that some decent Christians still honor the memory of these geno- idal killers of women, babies, and men — mass murderers who pro- vided a precedent for the Holocaust. In my own state of Massachusetts, Holy Cross University calls its athletic teams the Crusaders. That seems about as sensitive as if a Lutheran university were to name its football team the Storm Troopers. At least, to my knowledge, no college has glorified the Inquisitors.

The Crusades were followed by outbreaks of religiously inspired mass murder against the Jews for several centuries. The period of the Black Death, during the middle of the fourteenth century, led to the scapegoating of the Jews for the epidemic and the destruction of more than two hundred Jewish communities throughout Europe. The Span- ish Inquisition, at the end of the fifteenth century, marked the expul- sion of Jews from Spain and the movement of Jews eastward toward Poland, the Ukraine, and Russia. Jews were similarly expelled from other Christian nations — for example, England in 1290, France in 1306, Austria in 1421, and Portugal in 1497.

The Middle Ages also witnessed the development of one of the most persistent and pernicious historical lies in the history of Christianity, namely the "blood libel." The blood libel was a clerical invention charging the Jews with murdering Christian children in order to use their blood for religious rituals. Although its origins are shrouded in obscurity, it seems to have been strengthened by a corruption of a tenet that emerged from the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), in which the eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation — the bread and wine of the eucharist as Christ's body and blood — was formulated. Jews were occasionally accused of stealing a consecrated host and subjecting it to mistreatment. The Fourth Lateran Council also enacted a canon re- quiring Jews to wear a distinguishing badge — a precedent for the yellow star of Nazism.

The blood libel was preached from the pulpit, written in holy books, and passed down from generation to generation. It provoked — and justified — religious pogroms from as early as 1298, when an estimated 100,000 Jews were murdered in Germany and Austria, and has persisted into the twentieth century.

In 1876, a leading Russian writer wrote a pamphlet "concerning the use of Christian blood by Jewish sects for religious purposes."[1] This pamphlet was quite popular in czarist Russia and was reprinted numerous times. Between 1911 and 1913, a Jewish superintendent of a brick kiln in Kiev stood charged with murdering a twelve-year-old Christian boy in order to use his blood in a religious ritual. Although the evidence was overwhelming that a gang of thieves had committed the murder, the Jew — Menachem Mendel Beilis — was framed by the anti-Semitic minister of justice and charged with the crime. The trial became an international event (and eventually the subject of Bernard Malamud's prize-winning novel *The Fixer*). Among the pros- ecution witnesses was a Catholic priest named Father Justin Paranaitis, who swore that the murder of the boy bore all the hallmarks of a ritual killing as required by Jewish tradition. His testimony was refuted by several experts on Jewish law, who testified that there was absolutely no basis in Jewish sources for the use of Christian blood in ritual. The jury, composed of local Christian peasants, unanimously acquitted Beilis.

faced with comparable external and internal threats to its survival.

Critics of Israel who generally take no interest in human rights or civil liberties — right-wing columnists such as Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Georgie Anne Geyer, Joseph Sobran, and Patrick Buchanan come immediately to mind — have some explaining to do as to why they single out Israel for special condemnation. The same, of course, is true of nations with abominable records on human rights who lecture and hector Israel on its lack of perfection in these areas.

Even many Israelis I know often forget the big picture, in their rush to condemn particular policies (especially when implemented by the party to which they are opposed).

The case for Israel can and should be made not by compromising principles of justice, egalitarianism, civil liberties, and liberalism, but rather by reference to those lofty principles. I do not shrink from making that case, even though it requires an occasional criticism of specific Israeli practices — any more than I shrink away from making the case for America with full awareness and acknowledgment of our imperfections in practice.

When my friends and I were growing up in our Orthodox *shtetl* in Brooklyn, the problem of Israeli actions conflicting with personal philosophy arose almost exclusively in the context of religion: the secular state of Israel was just not religious enough for us.

Our families and teachers did not take the extremist view, associated with organizations such as Neturai Karte, that the establishment of a Jewish state before the arrival of the Messiah was a misguided heresy. We were too practical for that. There were tens of thousands of displaced persons, survivors of the Holocaust, who had nowhere to go. Whatever one's religious views — and we debated these endlessly — the Holocaust had made Israel a practical necessity. But that didn't mean it had to be so secular!

As long as the issues remained on that level, the conflict between our Zionism and our criticism did not create any dilemma. Nobody except the Jews gave a damn about our little internal disputes! It was a fight within the family.

Everything changed after the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel's status seemed transformed from underdog to victorious warrior. Now everyone in the world seems to give a damn — and have an opinion — about what Israel does, how American Jews judge Israeli actions, and what we say, or don't say, about Israel. This is understandable, within

limits, since the issues now do involve others, primarily Palestinians both inside and outside Israel. The disputes are no longer within the family.

The stakes for Israel are also far higher than they were when we used to criticize it as kids. Every current criticism of Israel — whether made by Israelis, American Jews, or others — is used by its enemies as part of an explicit international campaign to delegitimate Israel. The notorious "Zionism is a form of racism" resolution is the most striking example. Nor is it over, as the repeated efforts to withdraw Israel's credentials in the UN General Assembly attest, and the constant comparisons between Israel and South Africa — which *has* been delegitimized by the world community.

I have been actively struggling with this dilemma since 1967. Before that time, I saw — and still see — no conflict between my Zionism and my moral principles. Israel was almost entirely in the right. The Israeli-Arab conflict was as simple a clash between good and evil as existed in our imperfect world. It is important to recall the pre-1967 situation in order to give context to the post-1967 criticisms.

The Jews had earned their right to a homeland. They had settled and worked mostly barren areas of the British mandate of Palestine, which they had bought — with the help of contributions from our blue-and-white Jewish National Fund boxes — largely from absentee landlords. They built hospitals, schools, and kibbutzim, and established the infrastructure of a state. They quite literally turned swampland into orchards and made the desert bloom. More important, because of the actions of the entire world toward Jews — their second-class status and the barriers to their immigration — it had become clear that the Jews needed a state.

They were prepared to compromise their biblical and historic claims and to accept a fraction of Palestine as theirs. But after the United Nations' 1947 decision to dissolve the British mandate and partition Palestine into two states, one for Jews and one for Arabs, the Arabs refused to agree to Jewish sovereignty over an inch of Palestine, even over land on which no Arab lived. Only three years after the close of the Holocaust, Arab leaders, many of whom supported Hitler's genocide, were calling for a war of extermination against the Jews — a "momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian

nassacres and the Crusades." The grand mufti of Jerusalem, who had pent the war years in Berlin with Hitler, expressed "greatest joy and deepest gratification" for the Nazi accomplishments and declared a 'holy war" whose goal was to "murder the Jews! Murder them all!"[2]

The 1948 war was entirely the fault of the Arab states (with a little encouragement from the British), which were determined to abort the new nation of Israel before its birth. Israel endured, with much loss of life, including many who had survived Hitler's ovens. When a truce was finally declared, Jordan was left in control of the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem — which had been continuously populated by Orthodox Jews for centuries — and destroyed the Jewish holy places, including historically significant synagogues and yeshivas. Graves and artifacts were desecrated. Jews were denied access to the Western Wall, long a place for prayer and lamentation. (It was not destroyed because it is a retaining wall for the Temple Mount, on which one of Islam's holiest mosques was built).

Little protest was heard from the international community — or from the religious world. Israel and the Jewish people accepted the loss of the Jewish quarter and went on with the business of building a state. The Arabs kept fighting, diplomatically and terroristically.*

According to the Arabs, all of Israel was occupied territory. There was no room for compromise. As the king of Saudi Arabia put it in 1954: "The Arab nations should sacrifice up to 10 million of their 50 million people, if necessary to wipe out Israel. . . . Israel to the Arab world is like a cancer to the human body, and the only way of remedy is to uproot it, just like a cancer." In 1959, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt announced "on behalf of the United Arab Republic people, that this time we will exterminate Israel." Nasser repeated that pledge just nine days before the start of the Six-Day War in 1967. Four days later, President Aref of Iraq declared: "The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear — to wipe Israel off the map."[3]

The big issue between 1948 and 1967 was the Arab "refugees" who had left Israel and moved to areas under the control of Arabs. There was great controversy, both within Israel and outside, over whether

* Remember, this was before there was any occupation or annexation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or East Jerusalem. At least before any occupation by Jews! All of this "Palestinian" land had, of course, been occupied by Jordan and Egypt, but with no protest from the

these Arab refugees had been pushed out by Israel or had left on the instructions of Arab leaders with the promise of a glorious return. There is obviously some truth to both positions. Certainly, many Arabs were frightened away by Israeli soldiers; some obviously left after hearing of civilian "massacres." (Whether these accounts were true, false, exaggerated, or covered up is not as relevant as whether they were believed by the Arabs who left.)

As a civil libertarian and human rights activist, I was never much moved by the claims of these refugees. Political solutions often require the movement of people, and such movement is not always voluntary. Making Arab families move — intact — from one Arab village or town to another may constitute a human rights violation. But in the whole spectrum of human rights issues — especially taking into account the events in Europe during the 1940s — it is a fifth-rate issue analogous in many respects to some massive urban renewal or other projects that require large-scale movement of people. For example, the building of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt necessitated the relocation of 100,000 Arabs and the destruction of numerous Arab villages.[4] There were certainly numerous precedents following both world wars, as well as other recent dislocating events of history — including the establishment of new states. There were so many refugee groups throughout the postwar world, and in so much worse condition, that it is difficult to understand why this particular dislocation assumed such international proportions.

For example, following the end of World War II, approximately fifteen million ethnic Germans were forcibly expelled from their homes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and other Central and Eastern European areas where their families had lived for centuries. Two million died during this forced expulsion. Czechoslovakia alone expelled nearly three million Sudeten Germans, turning them into displaced persons. The United States, Great Britain, and the international community in general approved these expulsions, as necessary to secure a more lasting peace. The presence of "disloyal minorities," or so-called fifth columns, had helped to destabilize Europe on the eve of World War II. It would be a source of increased stability if "population transfers" could produce a new Europe where Germans lived only in the two Germanies and other nations had populations that reflected their own ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. President Franklin Roosevelt's assistant Harry Hopkins memorialized his boss's view that although transfer of ethnic Germans "is a hard

procedure, it is the only way to maintain peace." And Viscount Cranborne said in the British House of Lords:

> The humanitarian case must be considered in relation to the causes of war. It can fairly be said, I think, that the suffering caused by a week's war would be more than the suffering caused by the efficient resettlement of these populations whose present situation is liable to endanger future peace.[5]

The ethnic German populations of these European countries had included individual traitors, saboteurs, and fifth columnists. But they had also included significant numbers of simple farmers, factory workers, and apolitical people who just happened to speak German and live in German enclaves. But since "their people" had started the war and then lost, it was deemed appropriate for entire ethnic German communities to bear the burden of relocation in order to reduce the likelihood of future wars. On the scale of human rights violations, forced transfer of minority ethnic populations in order to enhance the stability of the region did not weigh heavily in the postwar era.[6]

Comparable transfers of populations, though far less systematic, were occurring in the Middle East at about the same time. Hundreds of thousands of Sephardic Jews, who had lived in Arab and Islamic countries for centuries, were officially encouraged to emigrate. Some wanted to go. Others were frightened into leaving by the prospect of an Islamic holy war directed against them, or by the danger that they might be held hostage (as the remnants of Syrian Jews have been).

Similarly, many Arab residents of the new Jewish nation of Israel were encouraged to emigrate to Islamic countries by a combination of factors, including fear, a desire to live under Islamic rule, and political considerations.*

The exchange of populations in the Middle East served some of the same goals as the far more extensive, lethal, and systematic one that was taking place in Europe. It would remove potential fifth columns, stabilize the region, and enhance the prospects for peace.

But the Arab leaders did not want peace. They used the refugee issue to encourage continuing belligerency. It became an excuse for not making peace — for not accepting the reality that the ancient land of Israel-Palestine could be populated by two peoples and divided into two nations. It should be recalled that between 1948 and 1967, Israel posed no barrier to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza. There was no Palestinian state because the Arab leaders did not want a Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state. Their collective goal was the total destruction of the Jewish state. The Palestinian refugees would better serve that goal if they were kept in camps as a homeless people than if they were allowed to move out of the camps and establish their own state.

I believed then, and I believe now, that those who singled out the "plight" of the Arab refugees were more interested in singling out those who had allegedly caused the problem — namely the Jews — than they were in helping those who were its victims. Elevating the Arab refugee problem above the far more compelling problem of other groups was a form of indirect international anti-Semitism, acceptable in a world too close to the Holocaust to legitimate direct anti-Jewish bigotry.*

Any fair assessment of the Arab refugee problem made it clear that at bottom it wasn't primarily a human rights issue. The human rights aspect of the dislocation could easily have been solved by the Arab states, with the assistance of the United Nations. Several Arab states were, and still are, desperately in need of population. Had these states been willing to settle the Arab refugees — as Israel settled the Jewish refugees from Arab countries — the human rights aspect of the problem would have disappeared. The refugees would no longer be stateless. They would be citizens of an Arab nation, with all the "rights" that such citizenship entails. But a determined and coordinated effort was made to stop — actively prevent — Arab refugees from being settled in other states. They were brought in as stateless workers but denied citizenship or permanent residence. The decision was made to keep many of the refugees in horrible camps, precisely to encourage

* In assessing the morality of these transfers, it must also be recalled that many Palestinian leaders supported Hitler during World War II. They also actively and successfully opposed opening the doors of Palestine to Jewish immigration during the Holocaust. They were not — as is sometimes claimed — entirely innocent bystanders to the Holocaust. They bear some moral responsibility.

* A *New York Times* story of August 12, 1990, described the plight of "fifteen million men, women and children" who have been "internationally recognized as refugees." Following World War II, the number was between thirty-three and forty-three million, and at the time the Palestinian refugee problem began — with 600,000 to 750,000 refugees — the number throughout the world was between sixteen and eighteen million. Many of the current group are refugees from Islamic nations. Yet the world knows little of their situation. Only the Palestinian refugees have received widespread international support. It is fair to ask why.

er's Holocaust and Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia did not ran-
ly kill civilians. Nor was it weakness alone that caused these —
other — moral sufferers to forbear from easy recourse to random
nce. It was a refusal to lower themselves to the immoral means
by their oppressors.

n contrast, Palestinian terrorism began *before* the Israeli occupation
ie West Bank and Gaza Strip. The grievance of the pre-1967 Arab
orists was primarily over disputed land. Even after the occupation,
grievance was over statehood, not life or liberty. This is not to
grate the claim of Palestinians — or stateless people such as the
ds, Armenians, Tatars, or numerous others — to political nation-
d. It is to demonstrate that on a scale of moral claims, that of the
stinians ranks comparatively low. Nor does it rank particularly
n in terms of the need to focus attention. Disproportionate world
ntion, as measured by support from the United Nations and in-
dual countries, has been paid to the Palestinians, as compared to
er stateless and aggrieved people.

Yet despite the relative weakness of their moral claims, various
stinian groups — beginning with Yasir Arafat's Fatah and the
) — have resorted to the most vicious forms of terrorism against
ocent civilians, including children.

The world may have to deal with terrorists in order to save lives.
the moral scandal is that in addition to simply dealing with these
orists, much of the world has *honored* them. The standing ovation
orded Yasir Arafat — the architect of international terrorism — by
ny UN representatives in Geneva in 1988 will live in infamy. The
lingness of world statesmen — including the pope and other moral
lers — to treat Arafat as a person deserving of tribute is beyond
ral comprehension.

In response, it is often argued that Israeli prime ministers Me-
hem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir had also been terrorists, during the
rs of the British mandate. That is a false analogy. The nature of the
gin-Shamir terrorism — unjustified as it was in my view — was
y different from Arafat's. It was directed primarily at British and
ab military targets, not at families traveling on civilian airlines.
ither Begin nor Shamir was rewarded for his terrorism; indeed, they
d a heavy price, being relegated to minority status within the
aeli political system for decades. And even today, they do not
eive standing ovations at the United Nations.

* * *

Despite the hypocritical opposition to Israel by some influential officials, grass-roots support for the beleaguered Jewish nation was widespread in America and throughout the western world. Much of this changed following Israel's victory over the united Arab armies in 1967. Israel captured the Sinai from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem and the Old City) from Jordan. The Six-Day War was plainly a defensive one from Israel's perspective. Although Israel struck the first military blow with its preemptive strike against the Egyptian air force, there can be little doubt that Egypt had started the war by its closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping; the closing of an international waterway is recognized as an act of war, justifying a military response. Israel had clearly warned that the closing of the strait would be so taken.

Moreover, President Nasser of Egypt had publicly declared that a state of war existed between Egypt and Israel and that he would select the appropriate moment to unleash his formidable military machine — and those of his Syrian, Jordanian, and other Arab allies — in order to "drive the Jews into the sea." International law recognizes that no nation need wait until it is placed on the defensive by a military invasion before it strikes back. A preemptive strike designed to prevent an imminent invasion is universally regarded as proper and lawful. For example, if the United States had obtained reliable intelligence information, on December 1, 1941, about an imminent invasion of Pearl Harbor, no one would have disputed its legal — and moral — right to destroy the Japanese air force before it could reach Hawaii.

The capture of the West Bank was even more defensive in nature than the capture of the Sinai. Israel did not immediately move its troops into the West Bank, even though Jordan, as required by the terms of its military alliance with Egypt, had opened hostilities in and around Jerusalem and was inflicting heavy Jewish casualties there. Instead, the Israeli government sent an unambiguous message to the Jordanian government, assuring it that the Israeli army would make no move into the West Bank or even the Jewish quarter of the Old City *if* the Jordanians would cease fighting. But Jordan persisted in its aggression, and the Israeli army responded by capturing the West Bank and establishing its military border at the Jordan River.

The story of the Golan is somewhat different. As anyone who has been atop the heights realizes, whoever controls the steep high ground controls the valleys and lake below. And beneath the Golan Heights

well-documented PLO policy of placing women and children in terrorist staging camps, so that Israel cannot bomb terrorists without running the risk of causing "civilian" casualties.

Another example of valid criticism expressed in an invalid (i.e., knee-jerk) manner relates to free speech and censorship. There is both more censorship *and* more free speech for Arabs in the occupied territories than in many democratic nations. Japan, Sweden, Costa Rica — as well as many small, homogeneous towns throughout America — have less *actual* dissent than that which exists today within the occupied territories. Despite the existence of formal military censorship of a kind that would not and should not be tolerated in the freest of democracies, and despite the unjustified administrative detention of some of the most outspoken anti-Israel critics, considerable freedom of expression *against* Israel is permitted throughout the occupied territories. Arabs within the territories find they are freer to condemn Israel than to criticize the PLO or to support Israel. Virulent condemnation of Israel may result in the temporary shutdown of a newspaper or the temporary detention of a political leader, but dissent from the PLO line may result in what George Bernard Shaw called the ultimate form of censorship, namely assassination. For example, in response to the mayor of Bethlehem's proposal of a cease-fire in the Intifada, Yasir Arafat threatened: "Whoever thinks of stopping the Intifada before it achieves its goals, I will give him ten bullets in his chest."[8] To adapt an old joke about the Soviet Union to the occupied territories: Arabs in Hebron have the same freedom as Jews in Tel Aviv — they both can criticize Israel and praise the PLO.

Indeed, it is fair to say that the freest press in the entire Arab world is the all-too-censored Palestinian press in the West Bank. It is also fair to say that if elections were to be held on the West Bank, they would be the freest elections in Arab history. And it is beyond dispute that the most independent judiciary to which Arabs have access anywhere in the Middle East is the Israeli court system. None of this is to say that the press, elections, or the judiciary in the occupied territories are free enough for my tastes. But it surely is better than anything currently available in the Arab world.

There are several possible standards against which Israeli conduct in the occupied territories can reasonably be judged. First, as generally accepted under international law, there is the standard of human rights practiced by the previous government. No one can deny that Israel is according the occupied population far more legal protection and far

greater human rights than did the preexisting governments. There was total censorship and tyranny under Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian rule.

A second, and related, standard would be to compare the rights available to the occupied populations with those available to nonoccupied citizens of other Arab and Islamic states in the region. Again, Israel does considerably better by comparison. The governments of neighboring states such as Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia offer their residents almost no human rights. Invariably, they stand at the most repressive end of any objective ranking of human rights violators. Egypt and Jordan do a bit better, but the average Arab in the territories occupied by Israel has at least as much freedom as the average citizen of Egypt and Jordan, and in some respects far more.[9]

A third basis for comparison would be how other nations in the world today treat their citizens or citizens in areas they occupy, and how the community of nations responds to such treatment. The short answer is that several handfuls of democracies afford their citizens greater rights than those granted by Israel to the population it occupies. The vast majority of nations treat their citizens no better or worse. Occupying powers throughout history have brutally suppressed those under their control, especially when active resistance, such as that reflected in the Intifada, has continued. The usual response to violent uprisings has been capital punishment carried out on a large scale.

Finally, there is the standard of human rights applied by Israel to Israeli citizens. It is that very high standard — among the highest in the civilized world — that the Israeli occupying authorities fail to comply with in their treatment of the occupied population. The Israeli citizenry, both Arab and Jewish, has far greater rights to free expression, political assembly, judicial review, and other fundamental safeguards than does the occupied population. But then again the Israeli citizenry has far greater rights than the citizenry of the vast majority of nations in the world today. Never before in history has an occupying power been expected to extend to those it occupies all of the rights enjoyed by its *own* citizens. It is in the nature of an occupation that many of the rights exercised by citizens will not be available to the occupied population. That was certainly true when the United States occupied Germany and Japan following World War II. Those occupations did not last almost a quarter century, as the Israeli occupation has. But the German and Japanese occupations ended in the context

timate the feelings that many of us are experiencing. We, who are
: experts in sentencing, can't be sure whether our anger over the
itence is ethnocentric — whether it grows out of feelings of *rach-*
nes for a fellow Jew — or whether it can be generalized. And unless
can be generalized, we have no right to express it. You have shown
that it *can* and *must* be generalized and that we have a *right* to be
itraged."

A "right to be outraged"! Only a community supersensitive to the
ecariousness of its position in a society would think that way. This
not to say that thinking about the right to feel emotion is necessarily
bad thing. It does reflect a level of morality — a need to *be* right, not
nly to *feel* right — that is commendable. But it also reflects an ex-
essive concern for what "they" will think.

What "they" — the gentiles, the establishment, our bosses, our
ıon-Jewish friends, those who sit in collective judgment about our
ıcceptability in "their" society — what they will think still dominates
the public actions and expressions of our Jewish establishments. Per-
haps that is why Jewish organizations have been so successful in this
heterogeneous society of which Jews comprise barely 2.5 percent.
However, this extraordinary organizational success has not come with-
out a price.

In order to ascend the ladder of Jewish leadership, one has to be, if
anything, acceptable to "them." One has to look acceptable, talk
acceptably, think acceptably, and act acceptably. (Indeed, until quite
recently, most Jewish leaders even seemed to have acceptable names —
names such as Stephen Wise, Louis Marshall, Oscar Straus, Cyrus
Adler, Julian Mack, Balfour Brickner, and Phillip Cowen, which
didn't even sound Jewish. No -bergs, -steins, or -witzes to evoke the
stereotypes.)*

* Lewis Weinstein, a great Boston lawyer and Jewish raconteur, wrote the following lyric for a show back in 1934:

> The Brotherhood has for its aim,
> A Rabbi with an Anglo-Saxon name,
> Whose application we'll have to decline,
> If his name ends in -vich, or -sky or -stein.
> In addition to being an Aryan,
> He must be a Parliamentarian,
> Who can table a motion and squelch hubbub,
> And who'll represent the Temple at the Rot'ry club.

— Lewis Weinstein, *Masa: Odyssey of an American Jew* (Boston: Quinlin Press, 1989), pp. 305–306.

The "rites of passage" to Jewish leadership have produced a certain type of Jewish spokesman (the gender specificity is deliberate). He is moderate in his politics, successful in his business or profession, exercises considerable restraint in criticizing the powers that be, is slow in seeing anti-Semitism in every slight, picks his targets thoughtfully, leans over backward to criticize Jewish bigotry, is careful to maintain credibility with "them," is calculated in his use of language, avoids making enemies (even of his and our enemies) unless they are outside the relevant "them," and — most important — takes few risks. As the first important American Jewish leader, Louis Marshall, characteristically put it: "The greatest wisdom consists in knowing when to remain silent."[7] (Generally, Jewish leaders are also very wealthy, as if the Jewish establishment sometimes forgets that Tevye the milkman in *Fiddler on the Roof* is mocking his townsfolk when he sings "If you're rich, they think you really know!")

Jewish organizations — such as the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith — work from the top down rather than the bottom up. They are not democratic in the sense that democratic leaders are supposed to discern and act on the attitudes and feelings of their grass-roots constituents. To the contrary, proper attitudes and feelings are supposed to be formed at the top after consultation among the elite and then transmitted down to the faithful. Obviously, grass-roots feelings are relevant to the elite — leaders can never be too far out of touch with their constituents — but they are only one of many considerations in constructing the "official" position of the community.

Jewish leadership in the *galut* — outside Israel — has always maintained an elitist position vis-à-vis the grass roots and the relevant "them," whether "they" were the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Spanish, the English, the Arabs, the Polish, or even the Nazis. Indeed, the American Jewish Committee — the first major Jewish organization — was established expressly as a "committee" of "leading" Jews and not as a representative congress, precisely to avoid the appearance that it was a grass-roots political organization. Its president, Louis Marshall, ran the organization — indeed the entire Jewish community — with such elitist autocracy that it was said that "American Jewry was all but governed by 'Marshall law.' "[8] The influence of the masses relative to the elite has been a matter of degree, depending on the nature of the host community, the relative education of the masses, the dangers confronting the community at a particular time,

and many other factors. The American Jewish community at the end of the twentieth century may be the most democratic in *galut* history on a relative scale, but it is far from democratic on any absolute scale.

The theory of cautious American Jewish leadership, of leadership concerned more about what "they" will think than what is right to do, was tested only once in our history. That test came during the Hitler period, and the theory, along with the leaders who practiced it, failed miserably. Felix Frankfurter was not alone in remaining silent about Hitler's atrocities. The other major Jewish American leaders — even those in official leadership roles — continued their cautious approach.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise was the acknowledged leader among the Jewish rabbinate. And Joseph M. Proskauer, a former judge and prominent lawyer, was the most important lay leader, heading the American Jewish Committee. Neither was willing to confront the silent and apparently unconcerned Franklin D. Roosevelt about the ongoing Jewish tragedy in Europe. They feared that by raising this "Jewish issue" in the midst of a great "national" crisis, they might be pitting Jewish interests against American interests, thus raising the dreaded specter of dual loyalty.

Justice Louis Brandeis, who was generally quite assertive on Jewish issues, advised Wise that "it would make a bad impression on Roosevelt, in the midst of his overwhelming responsibilities . . . to trouble him with our, in a sense, lesser problems." Felix Frankfurter assented in this view. Even when Wise eventually received authoritative documentation of the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe, he agreed to a State Department request not to publicize the information until it could be confirmed. By the time the information was confirmed and Jewish leaders spoke out, it was too late for most of the Jews of Europe.[9]

Wise realized that his cautious approach was risky. Early on in the Nazi crisis, he wondered "how much we have gained by walking warily, by being afraid to be ourselves, by constantly looking over our shoulders to see what impression we make on others."[10] Yet he continued to worry lest his advocacy of Jewish rescue make a bad impression on Roosevelt and the other "real" Americans, who, he assumed, would not care about the Jews of Europe.

Proskauer, of the American Jewish Committee, was worse. He refused even to join Jewish demonstrations against Nazism. "For Jews in America, *qua* Jews, to demand any kind of political action is a negation of the fundamentals of American liberty and equality," he argued, totally misunderstanding the pluralistic nature of American liberty and equality. As one historian aptly put it: "Proskauer asked Jews to accept the status of second-class citizens to earn approbation as first-class Americans."[11]

For that generation of American Jewish leaders, the paramount goal was to avoid conflict between their status as good Jews and as good Americans. They believed that the rescue of European Jews was good for the Jews, but they accepted our State Department's conclusion that it was not good for America — that it should not be an American priority. These Jewish leaders believed that it would be improper for them — as self-defined second-class citizens — to challenge the U.S. State Department and the U.S. president when it came to defining what was good for America. In failing to challenge American priorities, they displayed their misunderstanding of American democracy, which is a process by which all groups try to persuade the decision makers that what is good for them is good for America. Rescuing European Jews should have been an American priority, and American Jewish leaders should not have been embarrassed to fight for that priority, with every resource at their disposal.

Not only did Wise, Frankfurter, and the other Jews who did not want to make a "bad impression" on Roosevelt fail the Jewish people, they also failed President Roosevelt. History will never forgive Roosevelt his abandonment of the Jews. His otherwise outstanding record will always remain tarnished because of what he could have done but did not do. It would not have reflected "dual loyalty" for Roosevelt's Jewish advisers to have urged him to rescue the Jews of Europe. That course of action would have been good for the Jews, good for America, and good for president Roosevelt.

Elie Wiesel understands the concept of loyalty to country and president far more clearly than did Frankfurter, Proskauer, and Wise. When President Reagan was about to travel to Bitburg to honor the graves of Nazi storm troopers, Wiesel took advantage of a White House awards ceremony to urge his president not to go: "That place, Mr. President, is not your place. Your place is with the victims of the SS." Wiesel was not concerned that by "speaking truth to power," he would be making a "bad impression" on the president.[12] He told the president what the president did not want to hear, but the president respected Wiesel — and those for whom he spoke — for his honesty. The president also understood that Wiesel spoke out of loyalty to his

country and to his president, as well as to his people. Wiesel tried, and failed, to convince the president that he would be making a terrible mistake — a mistake for America as well as for Jews — by going to Bitburg. A first-class American has a right and a duty to try to prevent his president from making a mistake.

Several years ago, Elie Wiesel flattered me by publicly stating that "if there had been a few people like Alan Dershowitz during the 1930's and 1940's, the history of European Jewry might have been different."[13] Generous as the assessment is, it is an obvious exaggeration. No private citizen alone could have changed the course of Nazism. But Wiesel's statement has made me ponder what I might have done, had I been a "Jewish leader" during the 1930s and 1940s.

When I travel to the places of the Holocaust — Auschwitz, Riga, Budapest, Bucharest, Frankfurt, Przemyśl, Kraków, Warsaw, Lódz — it is almost as if I am trying to travel backward in time. I have asked myself what draws me so often to these Jewish burial sites. On a recent visit to Poland, I finally understood: I *am* trying — on an unconscious level — to go back in time, so that I might be there when my people are being slaughtered. Although I fully realize, on an intellectual level, that I could have done nothing to help, I reach out for any possibility that I might have been able to save even a single Jewish life. It is a fantasy born of frustration, but to me it is very real.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to suggest a definite strategy that would have assured a higher American commitment to Jewish rescue. But silence was surely the worst approach. Efforts should have been made to bring over eyewitnesses — like Jan Karski and some of the Jews who managed to escape from the ghettos and camps — and have them tell their stories to the American public. A Jewish community so rich in communication skills could surely have done a better job of touching the American conscience. American Jews should have done for European Jews what they helped American blacks do only a decade later: make the moral case through dramatic acts of self-denial and civil disobedience. Jewish leaders were not afraid to go to jail for black civil rights. But they were afraid — not physically afraid, but afraid of what others might think — to go to jail, to chain themselves to the White House gate, and to scream to high heaven when the lives of fellow Jews were on the line. While Jewish leaders in Poland and throughout Europe were committing suicide in a futile effort to convey the depth of the Jewish tragedy, no American Jew in government — and there were many in high positions — *even resigned in protest* over American refusal to lift immigration barriers, to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz, or to take other steps that might have saved Jewish lives. Jewish leaders insisted on maintaining their dignified silence, their caution, and their loyalty to a morally reprehensible American policy, for fear that to act otherwise would make a bad impression on their "hosts." They did not want to spend the reserve of capital — or goodwill — they had built up through generations of model citizenship. They failed to understand that this was the time to use that reserve, and indeed to borrow even beyond the limit of their credit. It was the ultimate proof that American Jewish leaders did not regard American Jews as first-class American citizens, entitled to demand action on behalf of their mortally endangered brothers and sisters.

In his monumental work *The Abandonment of the Jews,* historian David Wyman outlined twelve steps that could have been taken to rescue hundreds of thousands of Jews. Each of these steps was actually proposed during the Holocaust. Some were as simple as notifying the Jews of Europe of the fate that awaited them at Auschwitz and the other extermination camps. As one of the few Jews who escaped from Auschwitz, Rudolph Vrba, later put it: "Would anybody get me alive to Auschwitz if I had this information? Would thousands and thousands of able-bodied Jewish men send their children, wives and mothers to Auschwitz from all over Europe, if they knew?" It was central to the success of the Nazi genocidal plan that the victims be deceived into believing that they were being transported to work camps. Had the truth been communicated to them — by radio, leaflets, or even the specially trained Jewish agents who were eventually parachuted beyond enemy lines — many could have been saved.[14]

Another simple proposal was to open the door — even a bit — to Jewish immigration into the United States, Palestine, North Africa, the Virgin Islands, or any one of a number of locations where refugees could have been out of harm's way. But no one wanted the Jews, even Jewish children, in large numbers.

Other proposals were more complicated, such as bombing the rail lines to the camps and even the gas chambers themselves. John McCloy, then a presidential adviser, was instrumental in preventing any humanitarian bombing designed to save Jewish lives on the ground that all bombing decisions should be made on military grounds alone. He did, however, veto the bombing of an important industrial city in

Germany on the ground that it contained beautiful medieval architecture!

Other proposals that were never implemented included secret negotiations with Nazi allies such as Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Slovokia in an effort to persuade them that it would be in their best interest — especially in the event of German defeat — for them to allow their Jews to escape.

Wyman concludes, after painstaking historical research, that "probably hundreds of thousands" of Jews could have been saved by these and other methods, had they been tried.[15]

But they were not tried, for two major reasons. First, there were many English and American officials who simply did not want large numbers of Jewish refugees to survive the war. They feared that hundreds of thousands of homeless Jews would complicate their postwar plans, would alienate Arabs in Palestine, and would increase pressure to permit Jews to immigrate into their countries. As one such official put it, if even a small number of Jews were rescued, this could "lead to an offer to unload an even greater number of Jews on our hands." This concern was echoed by Anthony Eden and other anti-Semites in high places.[16]

The other principal, and related, reason why proposals that could have saved Jews were not implemented is that American Jewish leaders just did not try hard enough to focus the attention of the world on the tragedy of the Holocaust. As Wyman sorrowfully reports: "American Jewish leaders [were unable] to break out of a business-as-usual pattern. Too few schedules were rearranged. Vocations were seldom sacrificed. Too few projects of lesser significance were put aside."[17]

Jan Karski had been warned of American Jewish indifference even before he left Europe. He was told that American Jewish leaders "won't be interested." "At 11 in the morning you will begin by telling them about the anguish of Jews in Poland, but by 1 o'clock they will ask you to halt the narrative so that they can have lunch." It was exactly how Felix Frankfurter and other American Jewish leaders — not all, but too many — reacted to Karski's report and to later confirmations of the scale of the Holocaust.[18]

I know that I and my generation of Jews would not have — and will never — go about business as usual while Jewish lives are at risk. We will scream, perhaps not to high heaven, but certainly to the highest human authorities. And we will not worry about making a poor "impression" on others, even on presidents, popes, and prime ministers. We have learned the deadly lesson of silence in the face of e
Too many innocent, powerless people died because of the silence of
many culpable, powerful people, for the tactic of respectful sile
ever to be tried again.

Following the tragedy of World War II, Jewish leadership bec
somewhat more assertive, learning from the chutzpah of the Isı
leadership, which almost never reflects an attitude of *shanda* in fror
the non-Jewish world. But in recent years, there has been a tidal v
of criticism directed against the so-called Jewish leadership in Ar
ica. Many of the nonelected leaders seem too anxious to please
"hosts," too willing to criticize Israel, too apologetic in their defi
of Jews and Jewish values. Recently, there was a "revolt" within
American Jewish Congress, which claims to be the largest Jev
defense organization in the United States. (That characterizatio
grossly misleading, since you have to become a member of the o
nization to take advantage of its popular and money-saving pacl
tours to Israel and other places of Jewish interest.) One of the chap
of the American Jewish Congress disbanded, issuing a statement
"we are tired of seeing those in the media who oppose Israel quo
our executive director, Henry Siegman. . . ." Siegman — who
appointed, not elected, to his influential job — has been a freq
Israel basher and apologist for leftist enemies of Israel and the Jews
speaks for no significant segment of the American Jewish commu
Yet he holds an office that makes him appear to speak witl
important representative voice. A lead editorial in the *Jerus*
Post recently criticized "deleterious" Jewish "leaders" who dis
"chutzpa" in "inverse relation" to their importance, and who
joined "the trendy bash Israel crowd." The *Post*, as I mentione
Chapter V, named this phenomenon "the Siegman Syndrome."[1

But the problem transcends Israel and indeed any specific issu
reflects a continuing need by some American Jewish leaders to p
their American hosts — to demonstrate that they are good Amer
first. The best way to demonstrate this is to follow American tre
If it is trendy in America to bash Israel, they join in the bash
regardless of how their constituents feel. If it is trendy in Ameri
show uncritical support for Nelson Mandela, then they join this
port, downplaying his pro-PLO and anti-Jewish statements. If
trendy in America to react enthusiastically to the growing nationa
in Eastern Europe, then they join this euphoria, ignoring its p

country and to his president, as well as to his people. Wiesel tried, and failed, to convince the president that he would be making a terrible mistake — a mistake for America as well as for Jews — by going to Bitburg. A first-class American has a right and a duty to try to prevent his president from making a mistake.

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Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to suggest a definite strategy that would have assured a higher American commitment to Jewish rescue. But silence was surely the worst approach. Efforts should have been made to bring over eyewitnesses — like Jan Karski and some of the Jews who managed to escape from the ghettos and camps — and have them tell their stories to the American public. A Jewish community so rich in communication skills could surely have done a better job of touching the American conscience. American Jews should have done for European Jews what they helped American blacks do only a decade later: make the moral case through dramatic acts of self-denial and civil disobedience. Jewish leaders were not afraid to go to jail for black civil rights. But they were afraid — not physically afraid, but afraid of what others might think — to go to jail, to chain themselves to the White House gate, and to scream to high heaven when the lives of fellow Jews were on the line. While Jewish leaders in Poland and throughout Europe were committing suicide in a futile effort to convey the depth of the Jewish tragedy, no American Jew in government — and there were many in high positions — *even resigned in protest* over American refusal to lift immigration barriers, to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz, or to take other steps that might have saved Jewish lives. Jewish leaders insisted on maintaining their dignified silence, their caution, and their loyalty to a morally reprehensible American policy, for fear that to act otherwise would make a bad impression on their "hosts." They did not want to spend the reserve of capital — or goodwill — they had built up through generations of model citizenship. They failed to understand that this was the time to use that reserve, and indeed to borrow even beyond the limit of their credit. It was the ultimate proof that American Jewish leaders did not regard American Jews as first-class American citizens, entitled to demand action on behalf of their mortally endangered brothers and sisters.

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When I travel to the places of the Holocaust — Auschwitz, Riga, Budapest, Bucharest, Frankfurt, Przemyśl, Kraków, Warsaw, Lódz — it is almost as if I am trying to travel backward in time. I have asked myself what draws me so often to these Jewish burial sites. On a recent visit to Poland, I finally understood: I *am* trying — on an unconscious level — to go back in time, so that I might be there when my people are being slaughtered. Although I fully realize, on an intellectual level, that I could have done nothing to help, I reach out for any possibility that I might have been able to save even a single Jewish life. It is a fantasy born of frustration, but to me it is very real.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to suggest a definite strategy that would have assured a higher American commitment to Jewish rescue. But silence was surely the worst approach. Efforts should have been made to bring over eyewitnesses — like Jan Karski and some of the Jews who managed to escape from the ghettos and camps — and have them tell their stories to the American public. A Jewish community so rich in communication skills could surely have done a better job of touching the American conscience. American Jews should have done for European Jews what they helped American blacks do only a decade later: make the moral case through dramatic acts of self-denial and civil disobedience. Jewish leaders were not afraid to go to jail for black civil rights. But they were afraid — not physically afraid, but afraid of what others might think — to go to jail, to chain themselves to the White House gate, and to scream to high heaven when the lives of fellow Jews were on the line. While Jewish leaders in Poland and throughout Europe were committing suicide in a futile effort to convey the depth of the Jewish tragedy, no American Jew in government — and there were many in high positions — *even resigned in protest* over American refusal to lift immigration barriers, to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz, or to take other steps that might have saved Jewish lives. Jewish leaders insisted on maintaining their dignified silence, their caution, and their loyalty to a morally reprehensible American policy, for fear that to act otherwise would make a bad impression on their "hosts." They did not want to spend the reserve of capital — or goodwill — they had built up through generations of model citizenship. They failed to understand that this was the time to use that reserve, and indeed to borrow even beyond the limit of their credit. It was the ultimate proof that American Jewish leaders did not regard American Jews as first-class American citizens, entitled to demand action on behalf of their mortally endangered brothers and sisters.

In his monumental work *The Abandonment of the Jews,* historian David Wyman outlined twelve steps that could have been taken to rescue hundreds of thousands of Jews. Each of these steps was actually proposed during the Holocaust. Some were as simple as notifying the Jews of Europe of the fate that awaited them at Auschwitz and the other extermination camps. As one of the few Jews who escaped from Auschwitz, Rudolph Vrba, later put it: "Would anybody get me alive to Auschwitz if I had this information? Would thousands and thousands of able-bodied Jewish men send their children, wives and mothers to Auschwitz from all over Europe, if they knew?" It was central to the success of the Nazi genocidal plan that the victims be deceived into believing that they were being transported to work camps. Had the truth been communicated to them — by radio, leaflets, or even the specially trained Jewish agents who were eventually parachuted beyond enemy lines — many could have been saved.[14]

Another simple proposal was to open the door — even a bit — to Jewish immigration into the United States, Palestine, North Africa, the Virgin Islands, or any one of a number of locations where refugees could have been out of harm's way. But no one wanted the Jews, even Jewish children, in large numbers.

Other proposals were more complicated, such as bombing the rail lines to the camps and even the gas chambers themselves. John McCloy, then a presidential adviser, was instrumental in preventing any humanitarian bombing designed to save Jewish lives on the ground that all bombing decisions should be made on military grounds alone. He did, however, veto the bombing of an important industrial city in